

A Note About This Story

Botswana became independent in 1966. This story takes place in 1965. In the year before independence, Botswana already had its own government. But the British were still helping to run the country.

It was a time of many changes. From 1886 to 1966, the area was called Bechuanaland. Bechuanaland was a British Protectorate. This meant that the country was ruled by its own tribal chiefs. But it had a British police force and British administrators.

Each tribal chief ruled over the people in his part of the country. These chiefs were called paramount chiefs. Local chiefs worked for the paramount chiefs. They were in charge of smaller areas – perhaps one big village. All the problems in the villages were settled by the local chief in the village meeting-place.

The country was very poor and the British did little to develop it. The people looked after their own cattle and crops in the old ways. The land could not be bought, because it belonged to the people themselves.

Perhaps for these reasons, independence came to Botswana more peacefully than to other African countries. There was no civil war and very few people were killed or injured.

To the south of Botswana is South Africa. The border between these countries is very long. Many black South Africans have tried to escape across this border. In Botswana, these refugees have found peace and freedom.

In 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest and least



developed countries in the world. Although it is a big country, the size of France, at that time its population was very small. Most of the people lived in the eastern areas, where the soil was better. There, they were able to keep cattle and grow their crops. But Botswana has very little water. In times of drought, when no rain falls, cattle and crops die.

The country was in the middle of a long drought in 1965. It was a terrible time for everyone. Thousands of cattle died and many people did not have enough food to live.

But it was also a time of hope. The years before independence were a time of change. The people of Botswana had always welcomed strangers and the new ideas they brought with them.

Because of this, the people learnt to grow different crops and look after their cattle in better ways. Best of all, they learnt how to find more water and use it well.

A year after independence, diamonds were found in Botswana. Today, the country is one of the largest diamond producers in the world. But the economy still depends on the rearing of cattle and the growing of crops.